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United States Patent [19]

Ong

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[54] **OFFICE ENVELOPE**

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[51] **Int. Cl.**[7] **B65D 27/08**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **229/72**; 229/71; 229/77; 229/928

[58] **Field of Search** 229/72, 71, 70, 229/67.1, 67.3, 67.4, 928; 383/38, 39, 40, 120, 125, 126, 106

[56] **References Cited**

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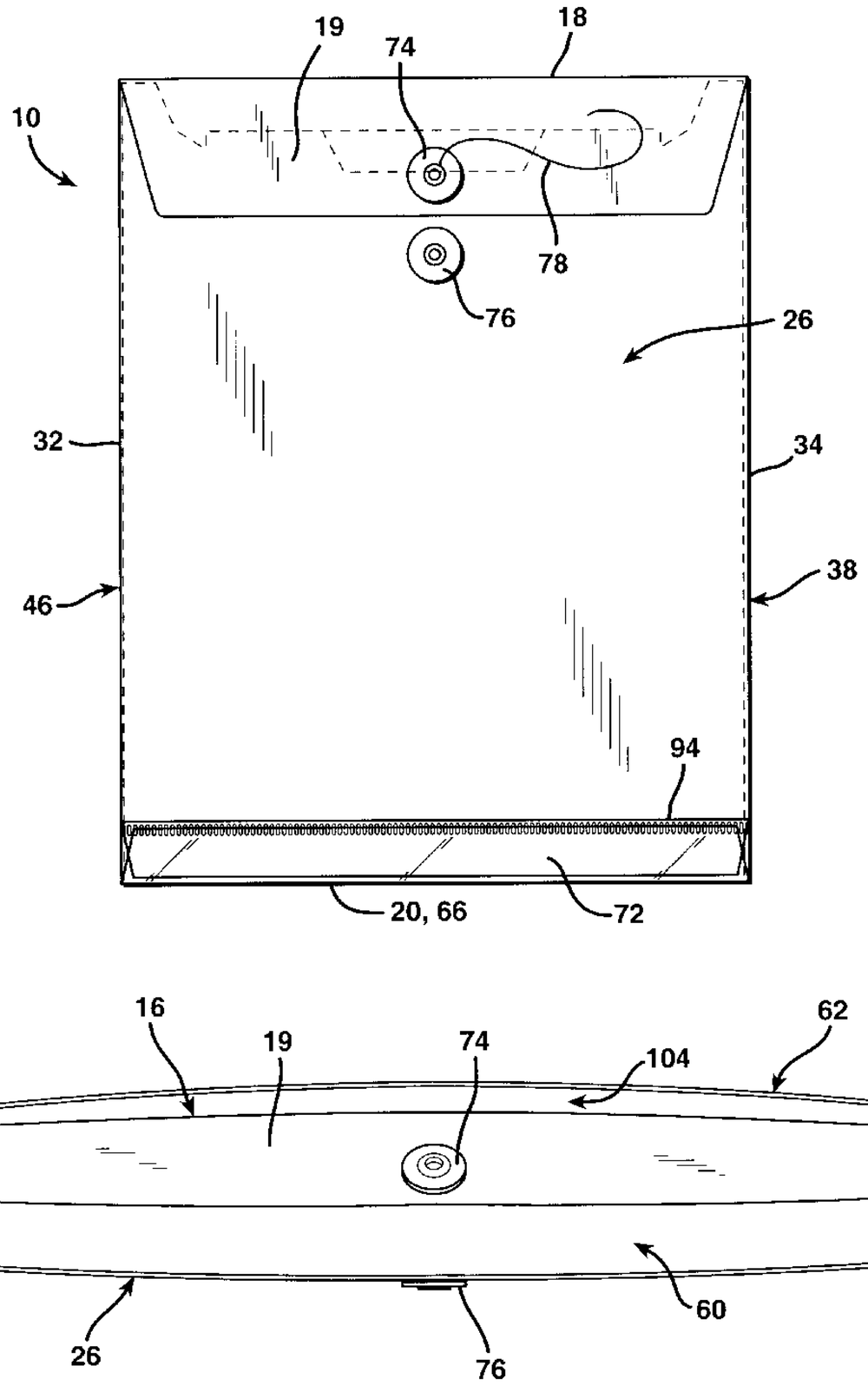
D. 366,495 1/1996 Hirai .

Primary Examiner—Jes F. Pascua
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Charles H. Thomas

[57] **ABSTRACT**

An office envelope is constructed of at least one flat sheet of stock of uniform thickness throughout folded to form overlying front and back panels and a pocket panel secured to the back panel. The panels are secured together by longitudinally extending heat seals located near the edges of the pocket panel. These edges are respectively secured to the back panel proximate the opposing side edges thereof. Also, one of the sides of the envelope is provided with an overlap margin that is also secured to the back panel. The overlap margin of the side panel may be secured to the back panel by the same seal that secures one of the sealing margins of the pocket panel to the back panel. Alternatively, separate seals may be utilized to secure the overlap margin of the side panel to the back panel and the pocket panel to the back panel by two closely spaced lines of sealing. The office envelope may be constructed from either a single sheet of flat stock, in which case all of the panels and flaps are formed from the same sheet of stock. Alternatively, the pocket panel and one of the bottom panels may be formed from one sheet of stock, and the front, back, and side panels and the other bottom panel may be formed from a different sheet of stock. When more than one sheet of stock is utilized to form the office envelope, a transparent sheet may be utilized to form the pocket panel and one bottom panel, while an opaque or translucent sheet of material may be utilized to form the other panels.

20 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets



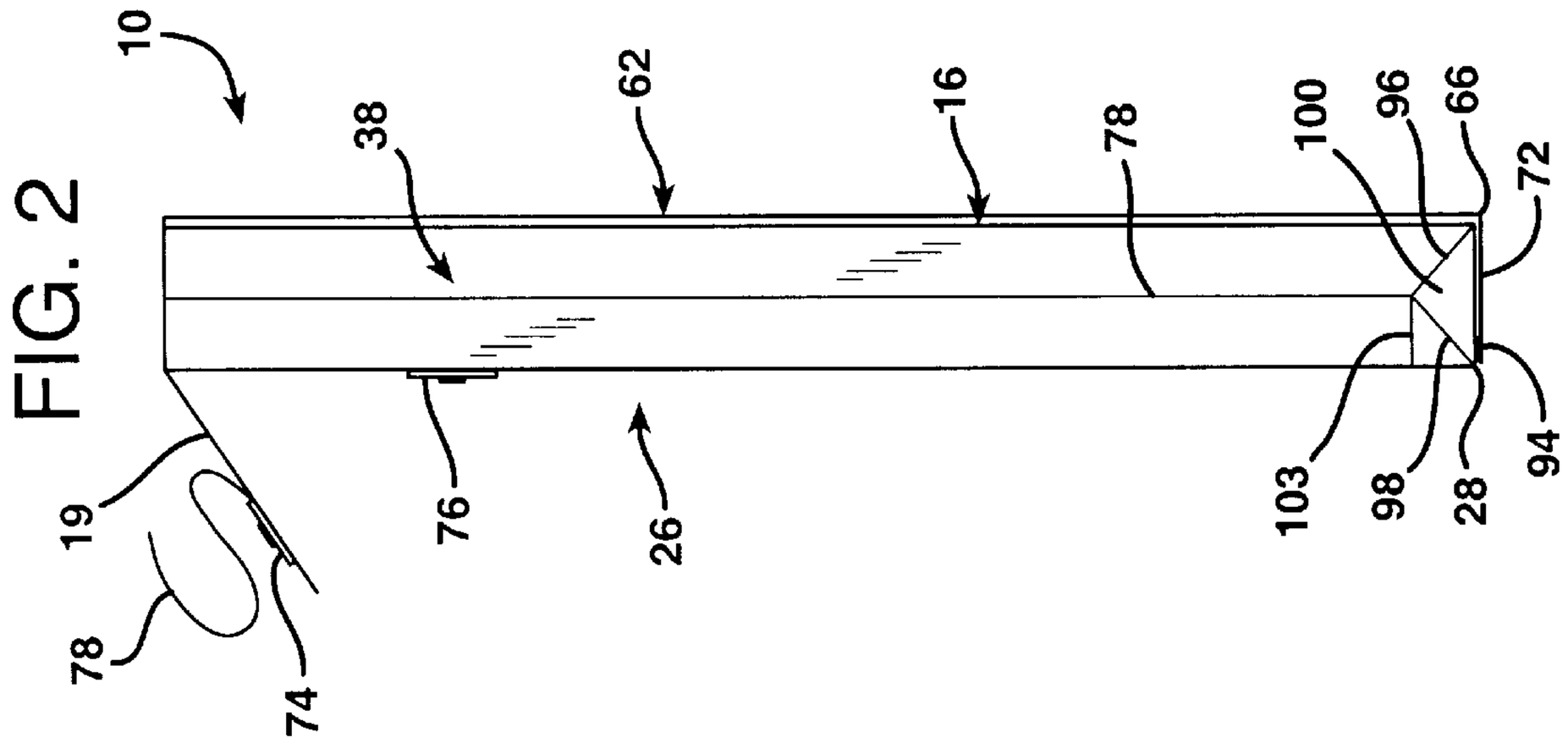

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FIG. 2

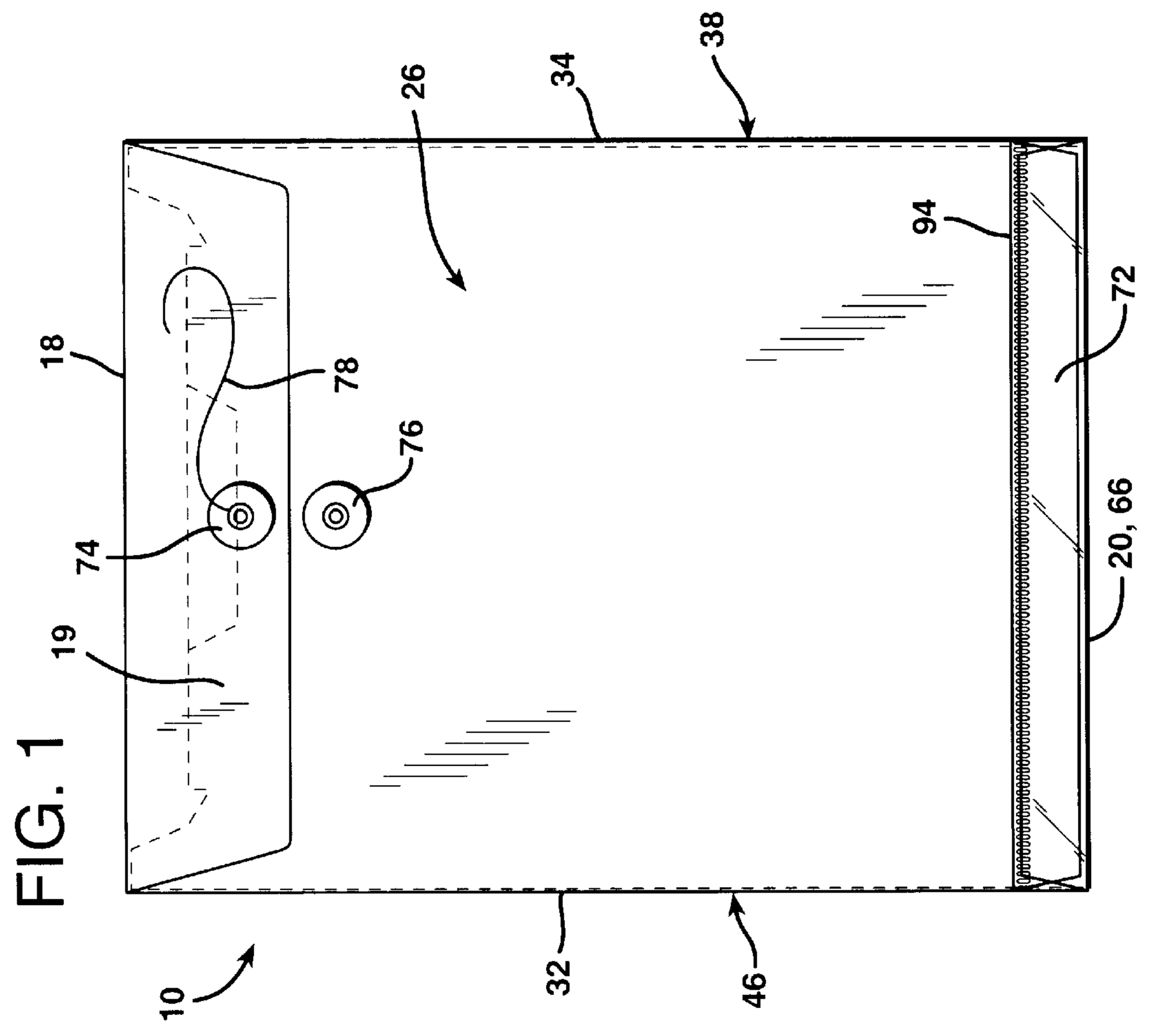
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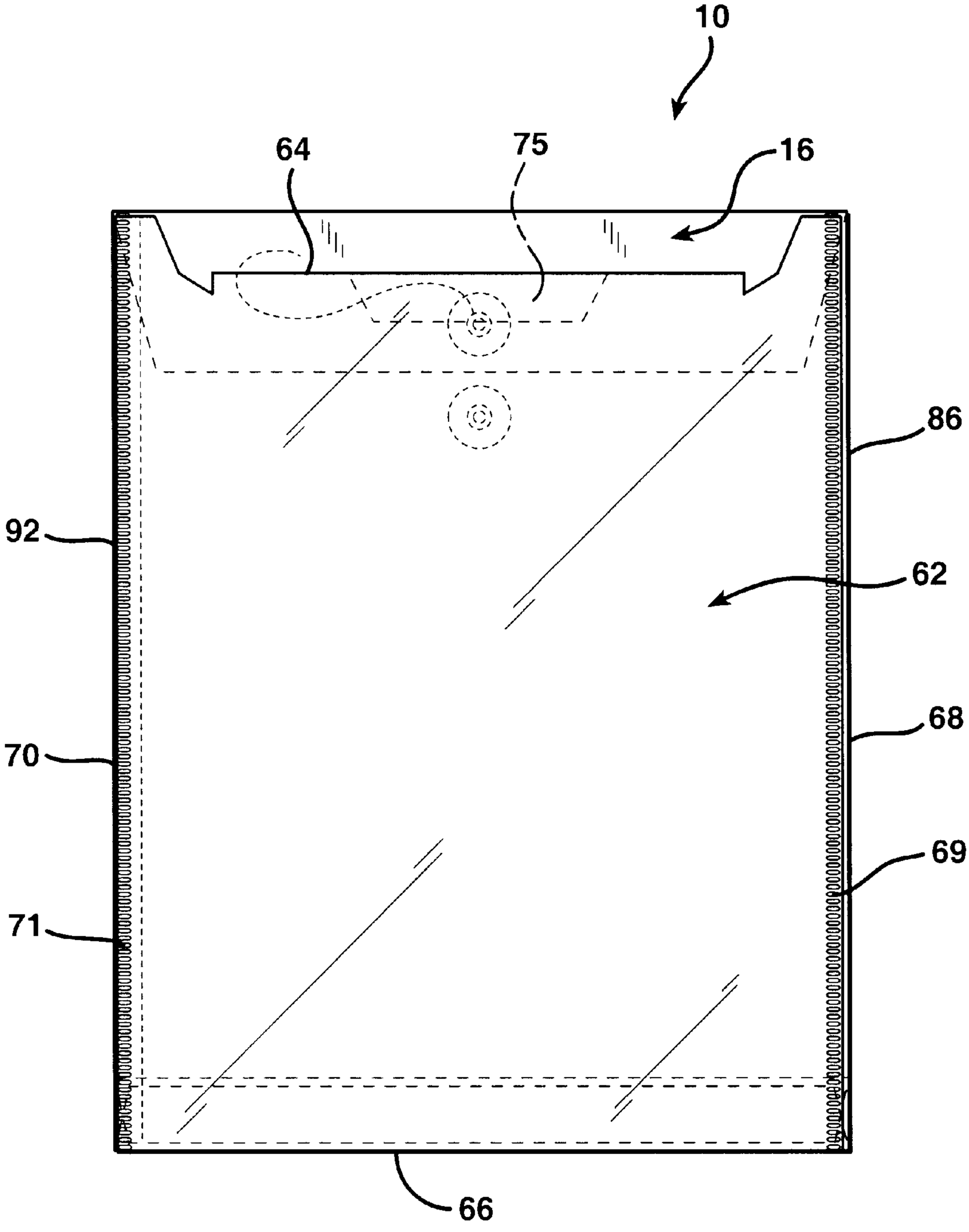
FIG. 1

FIG. 3



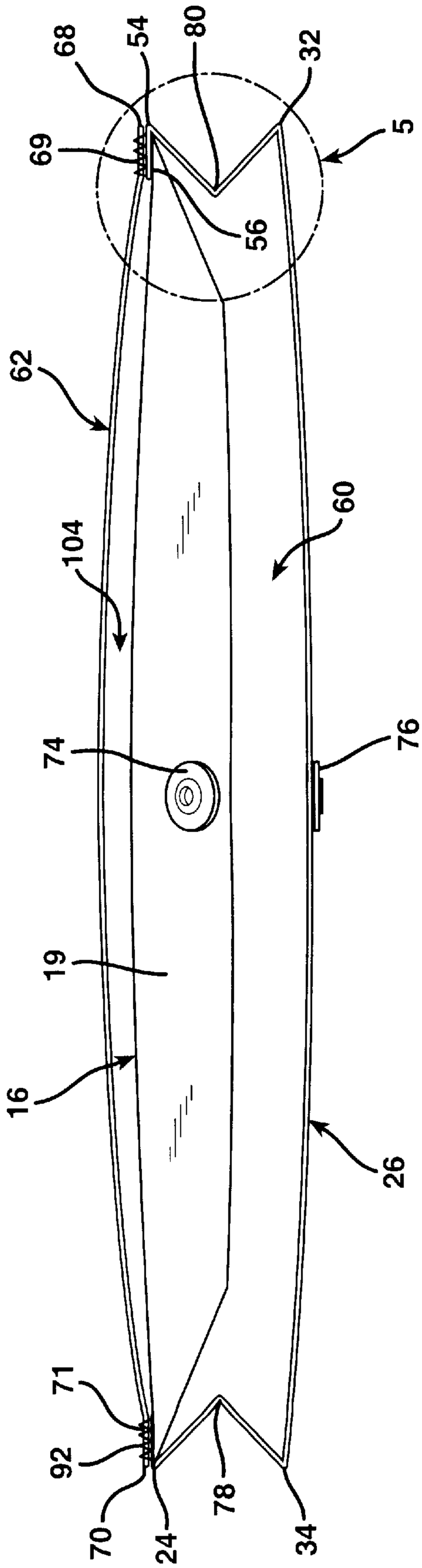


FIG. 4

FIG. 5

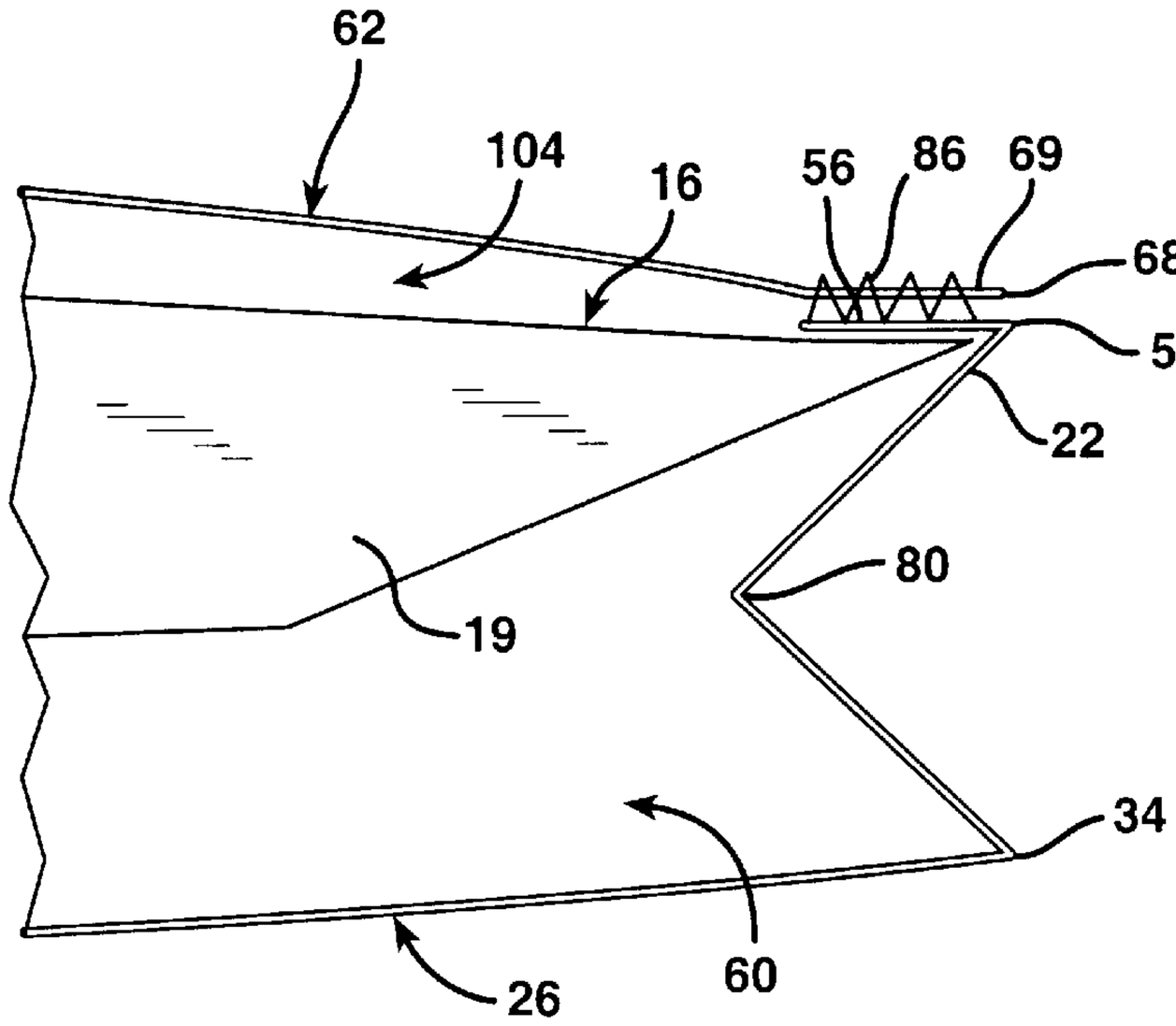

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FIG. 6

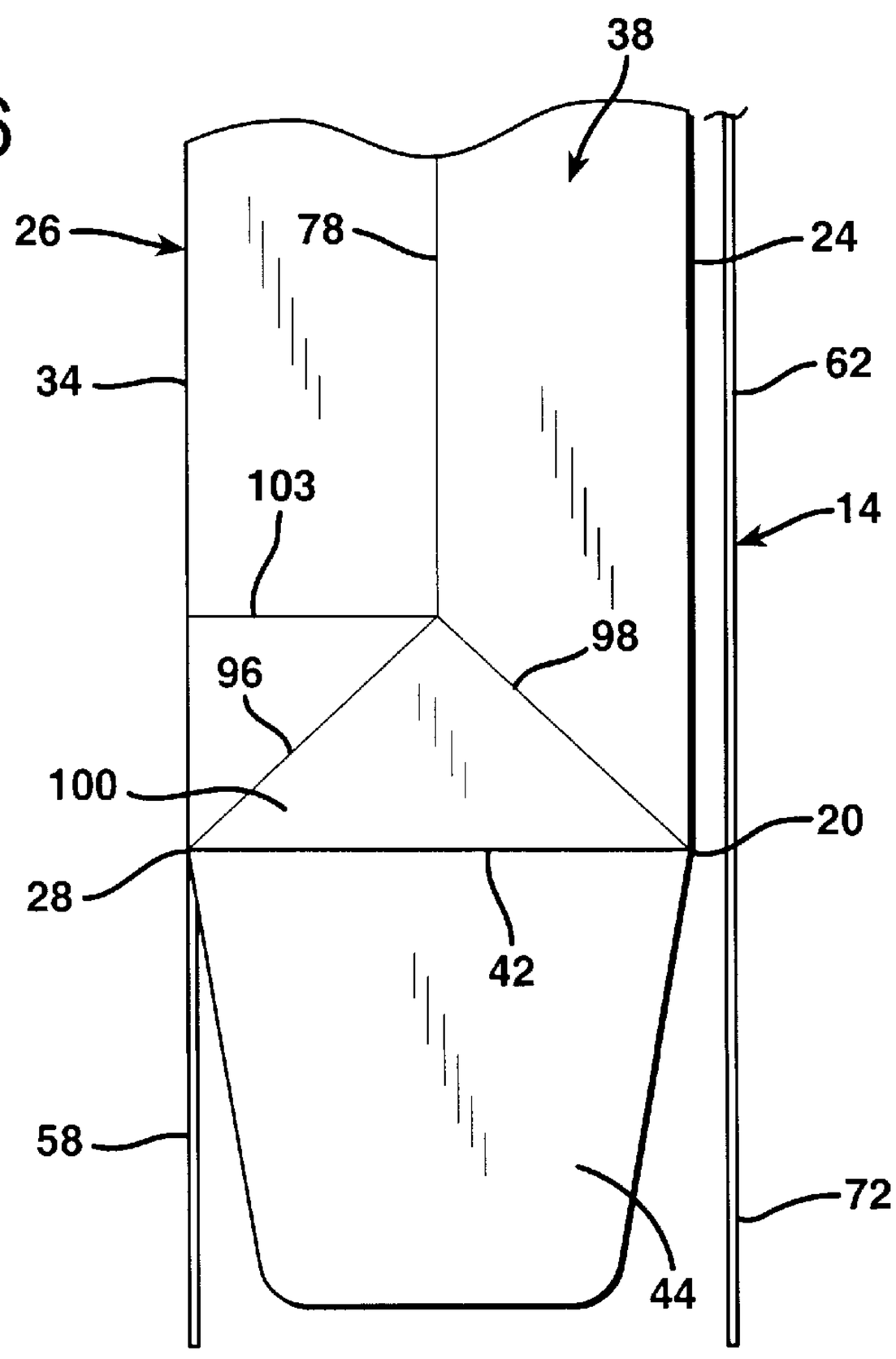
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FIG. 7

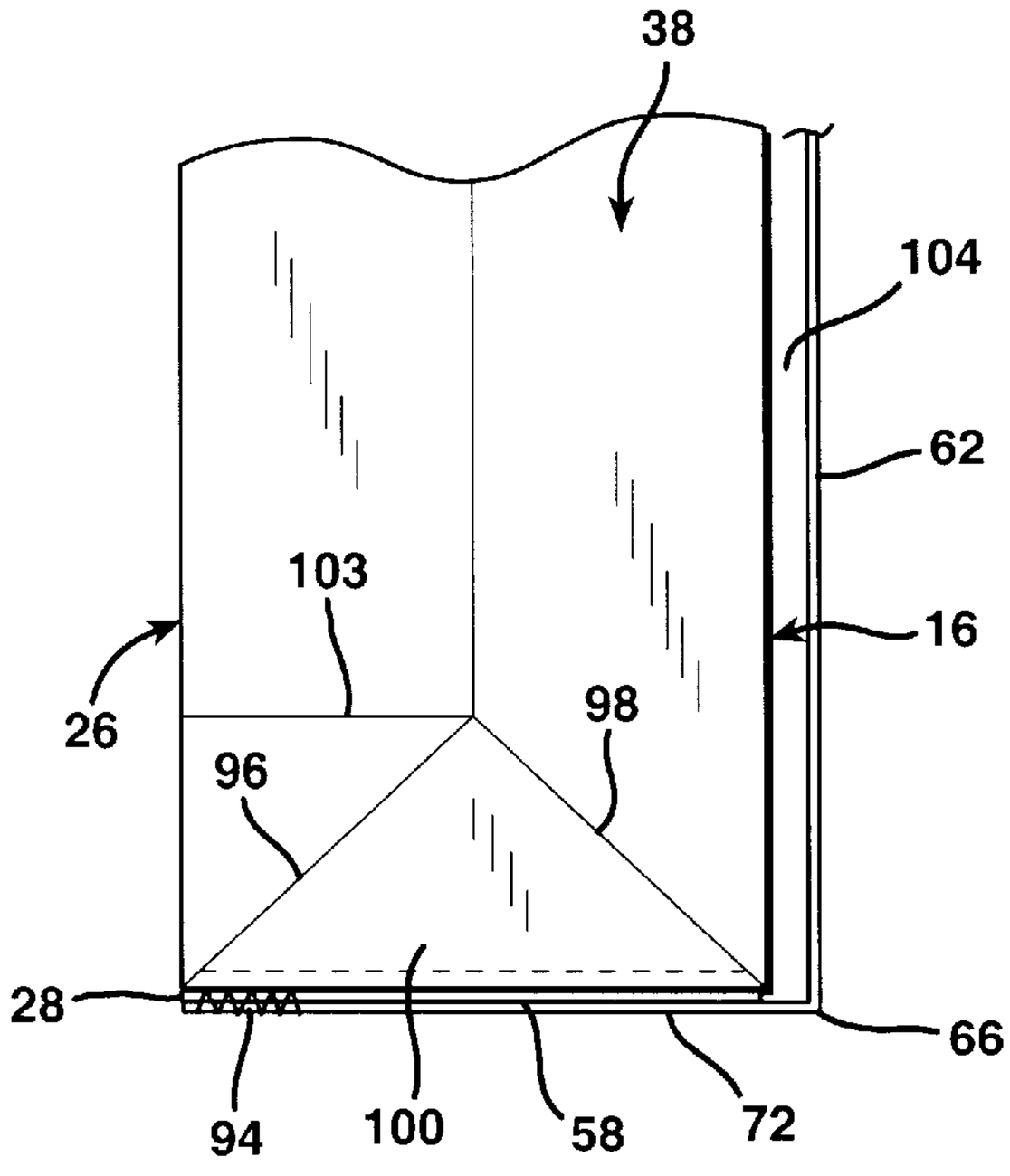
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FIG. 8

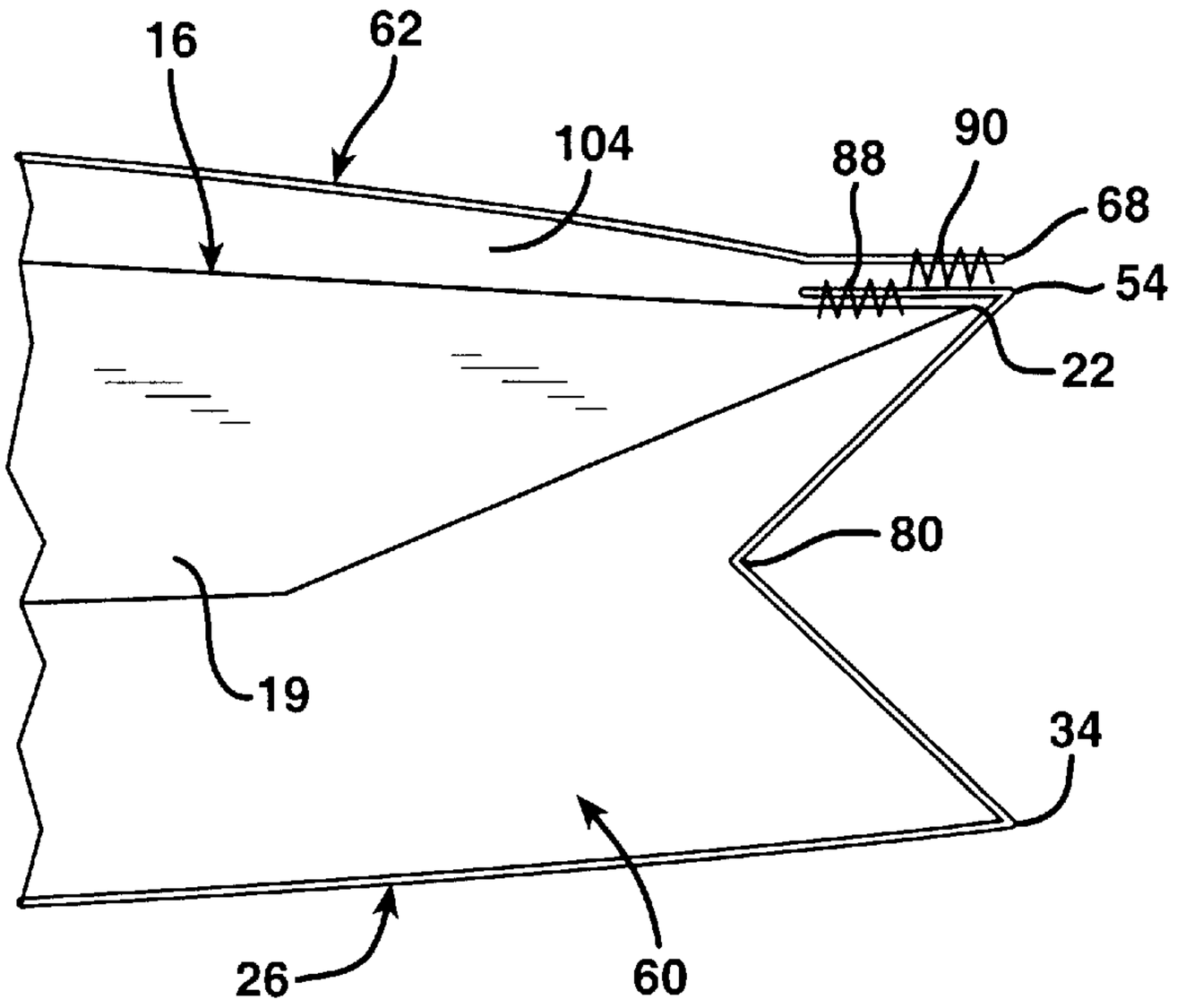
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FIG. 9

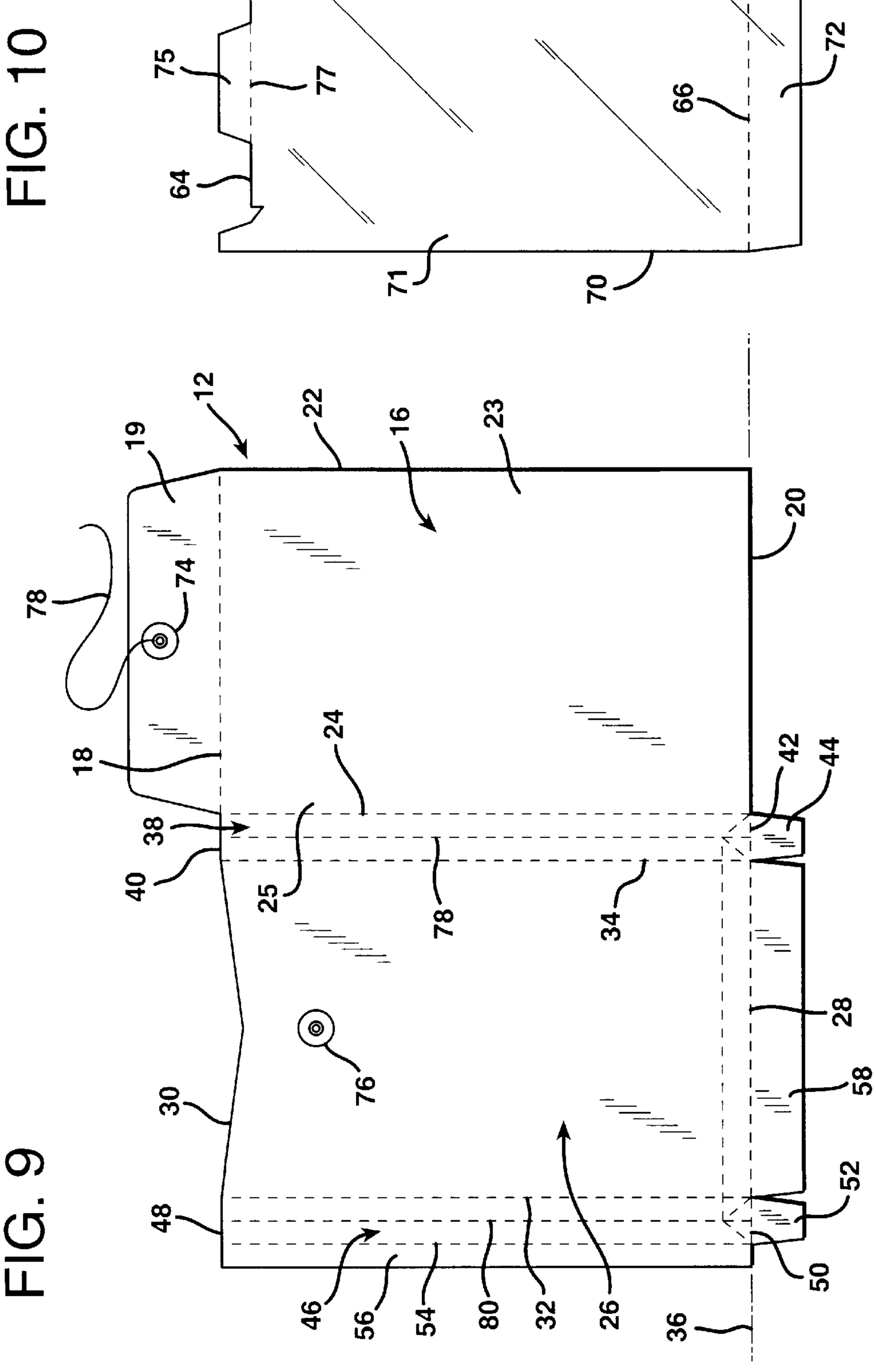
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FIG. 10

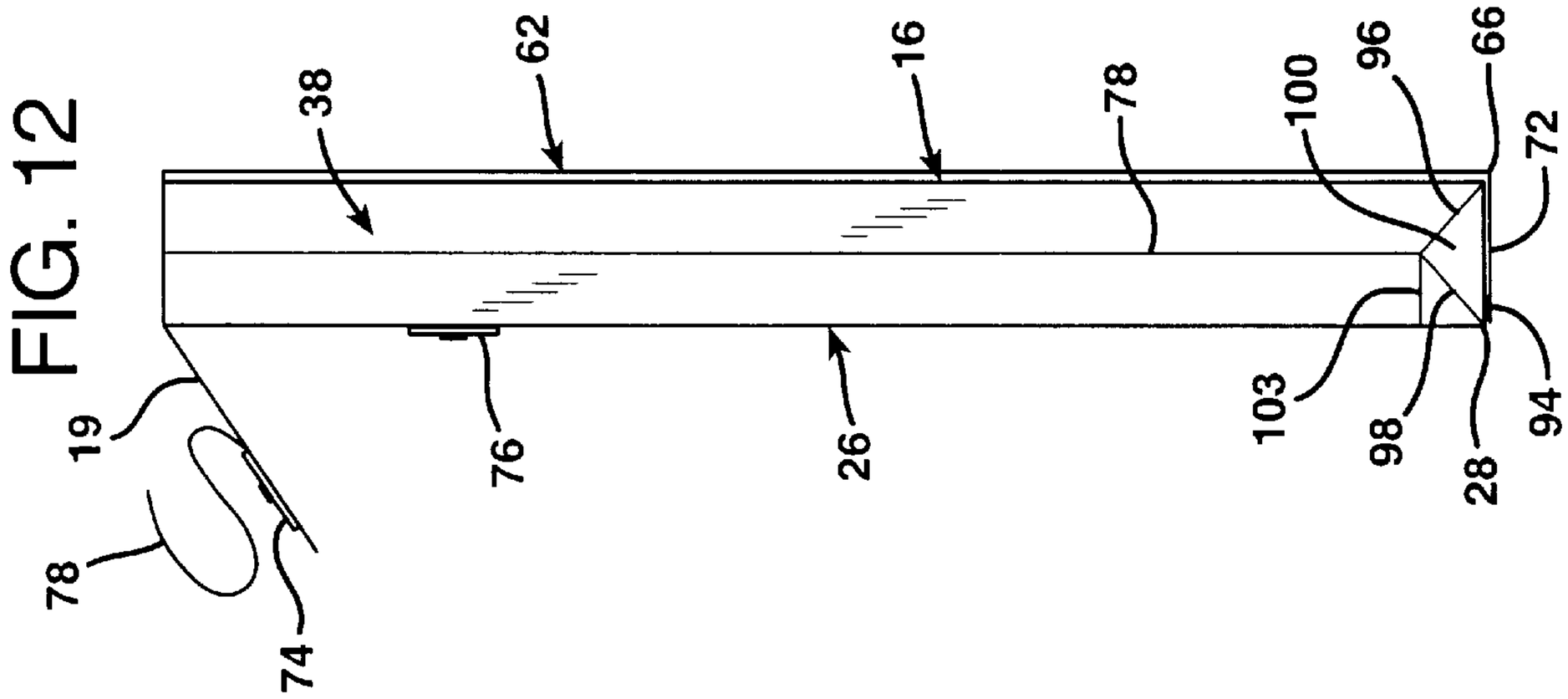
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FIG. 12

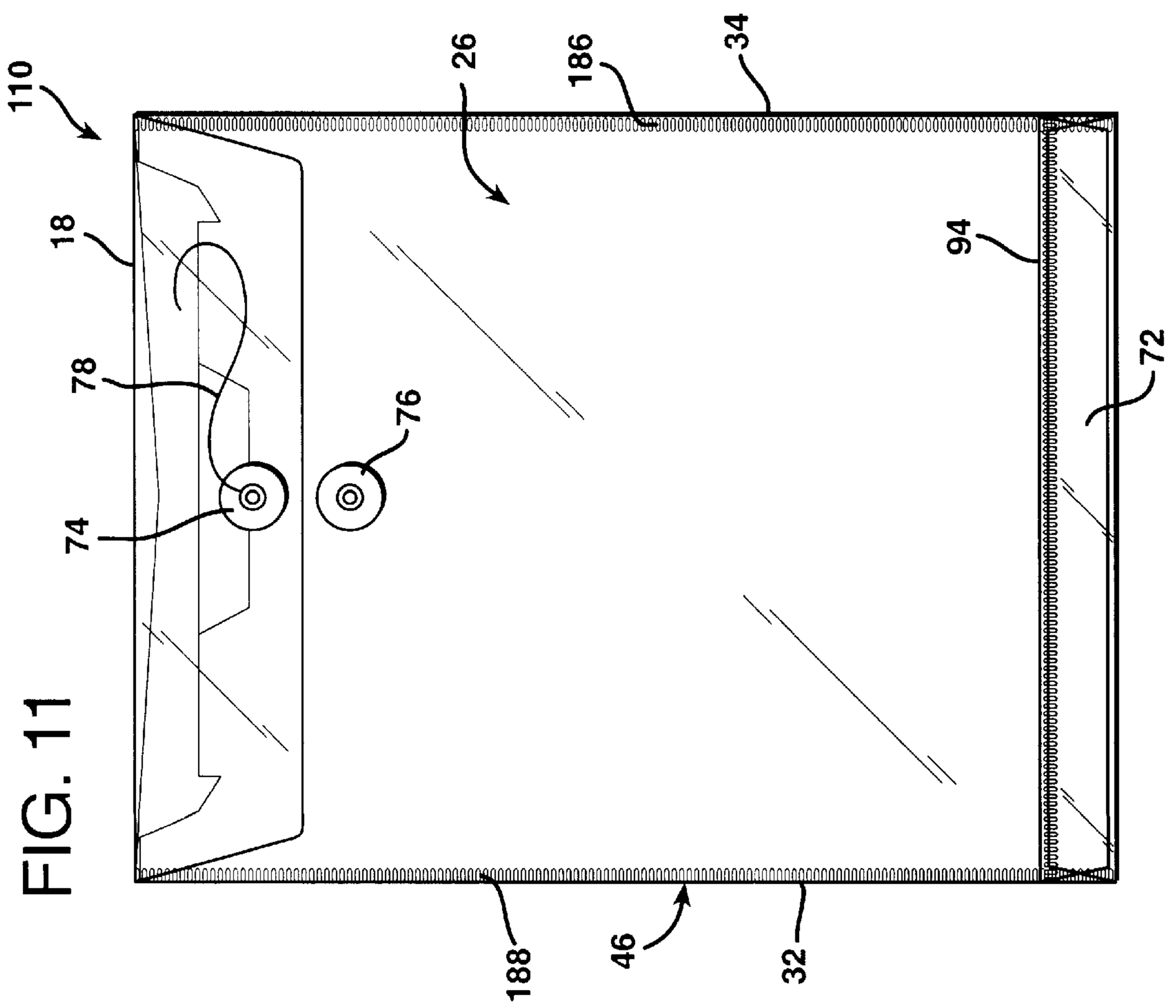
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FIG. 11

FIG. 13

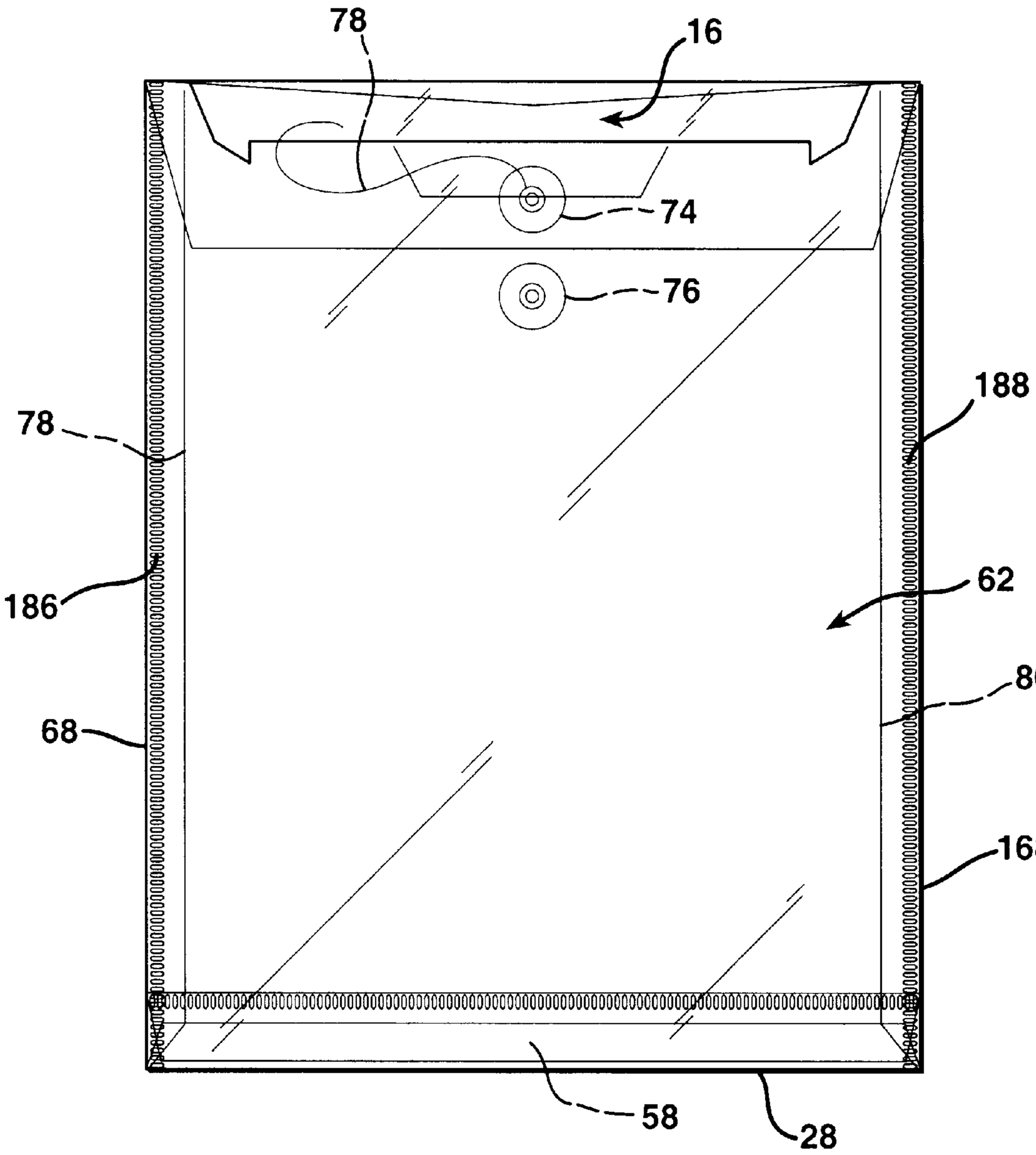

FIG. 14

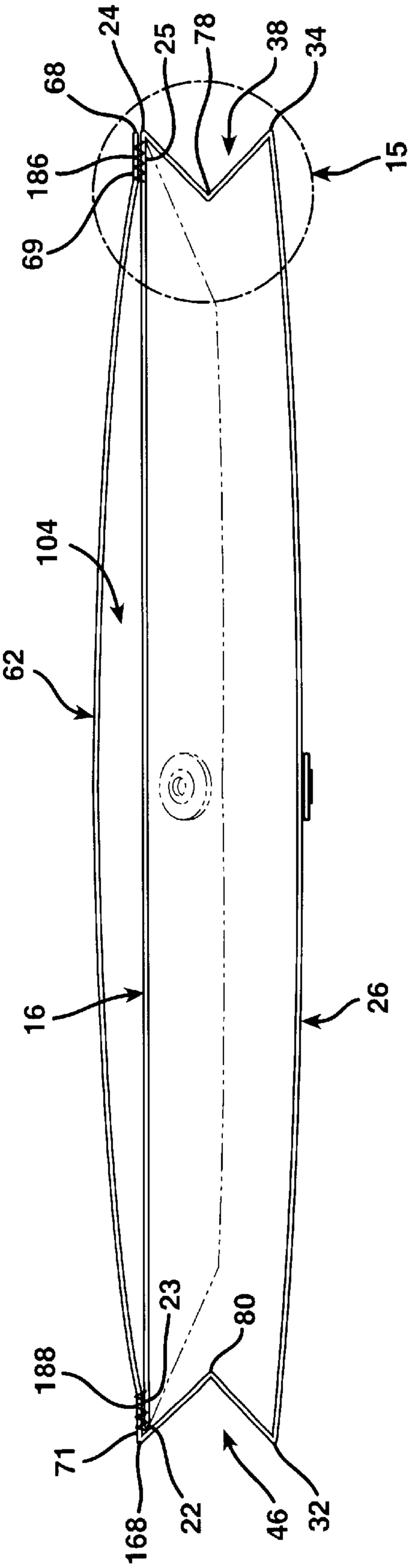

FIG. 15

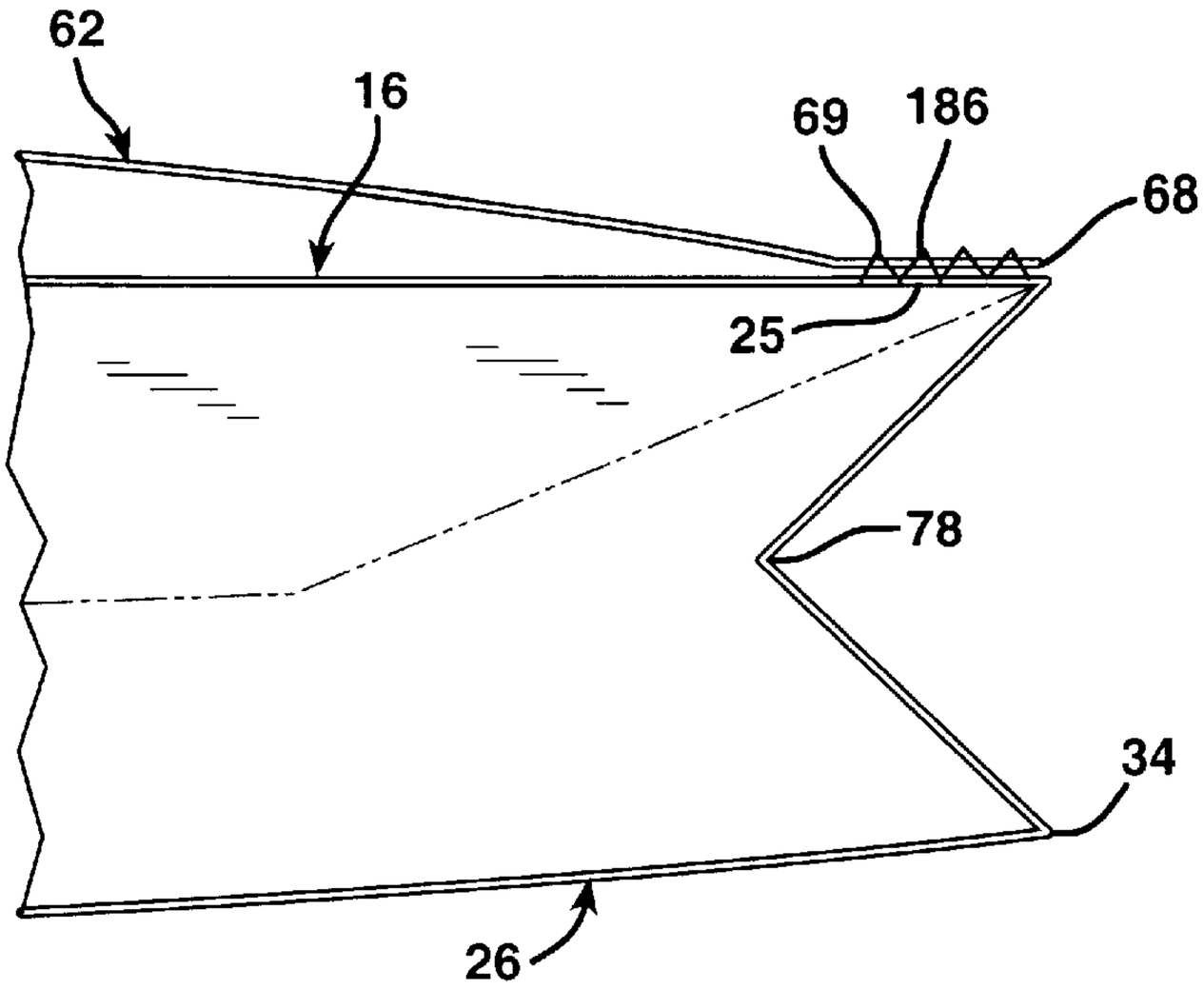
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FIG. 16

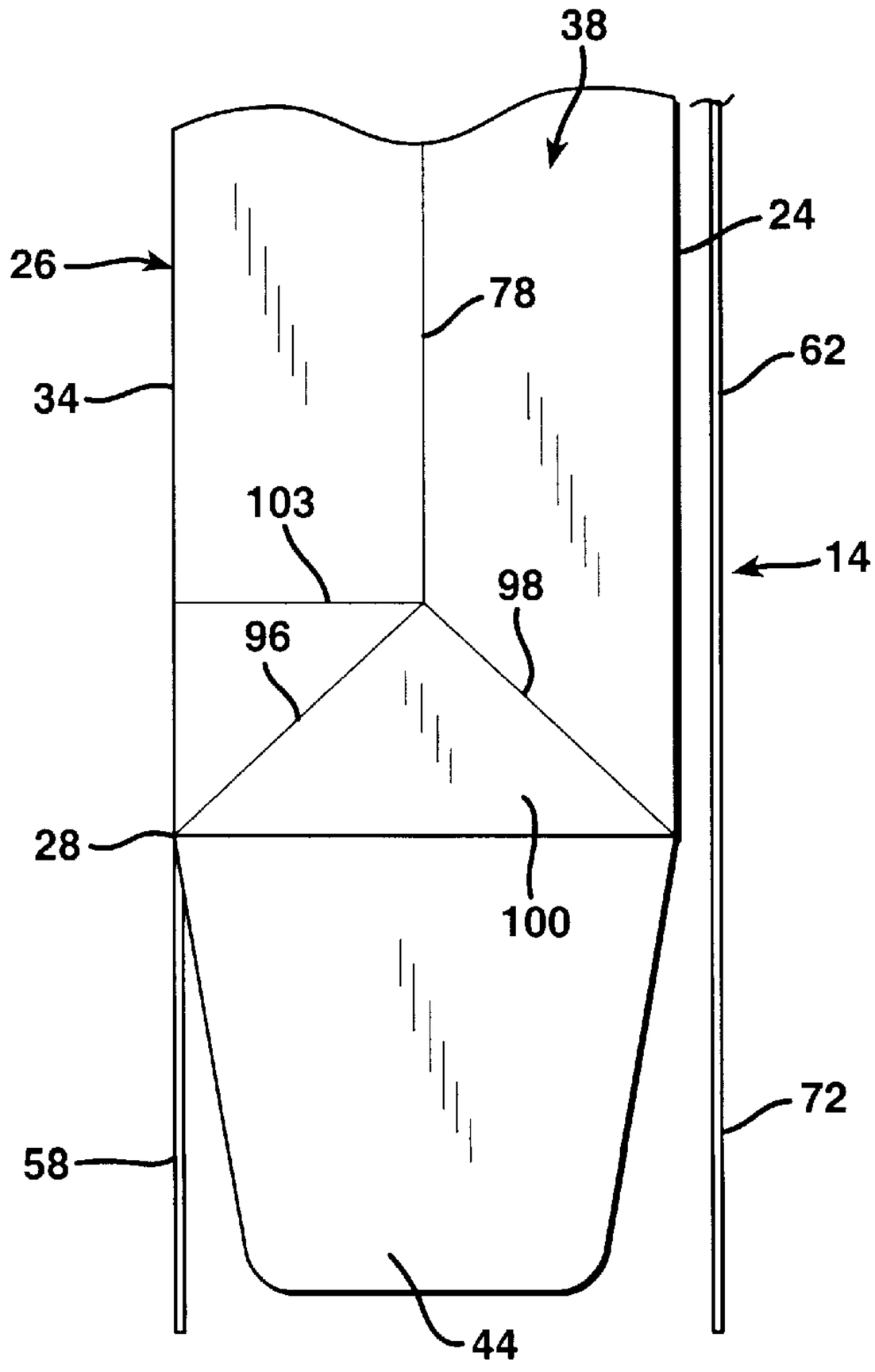
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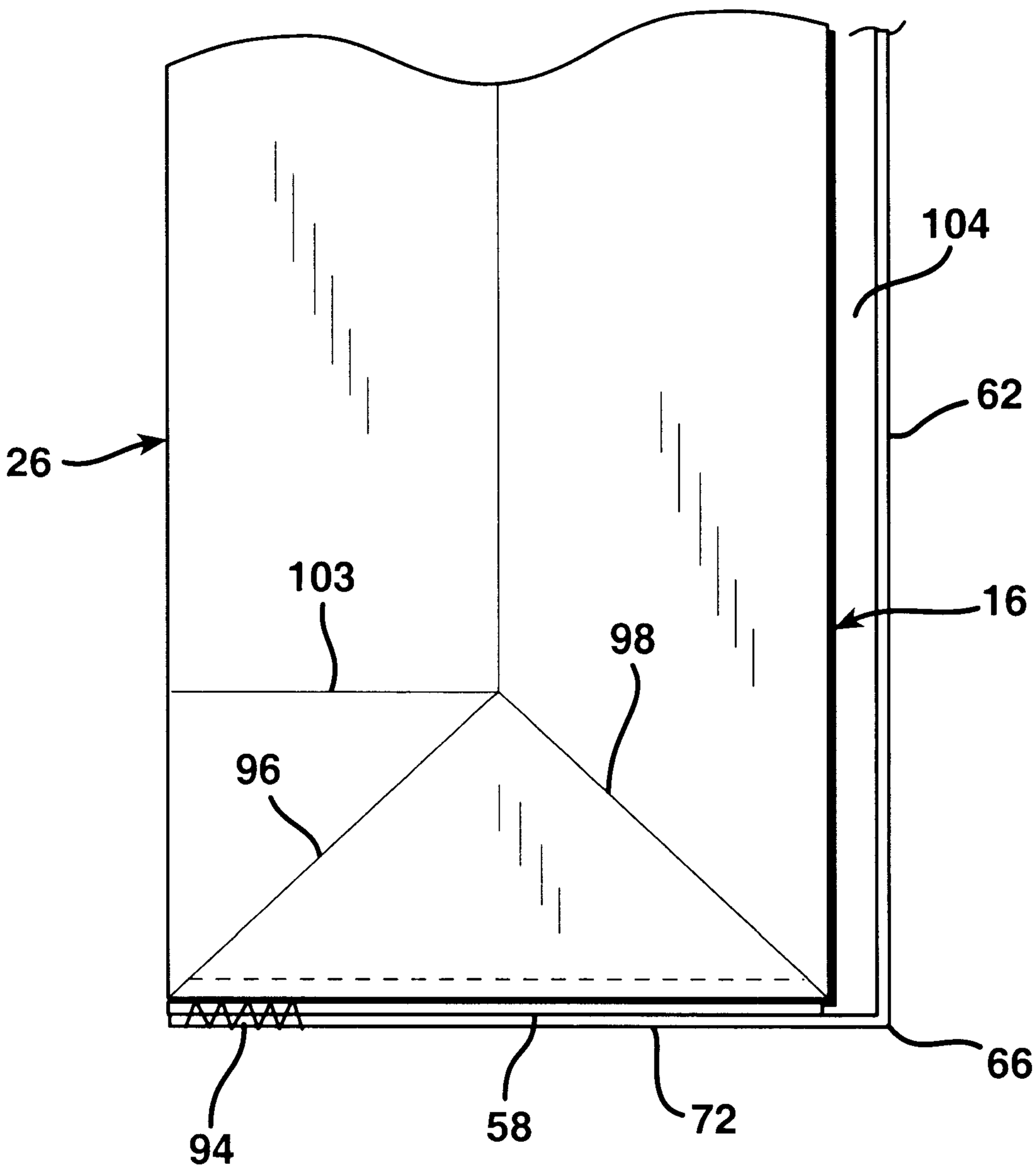
FIG. 17



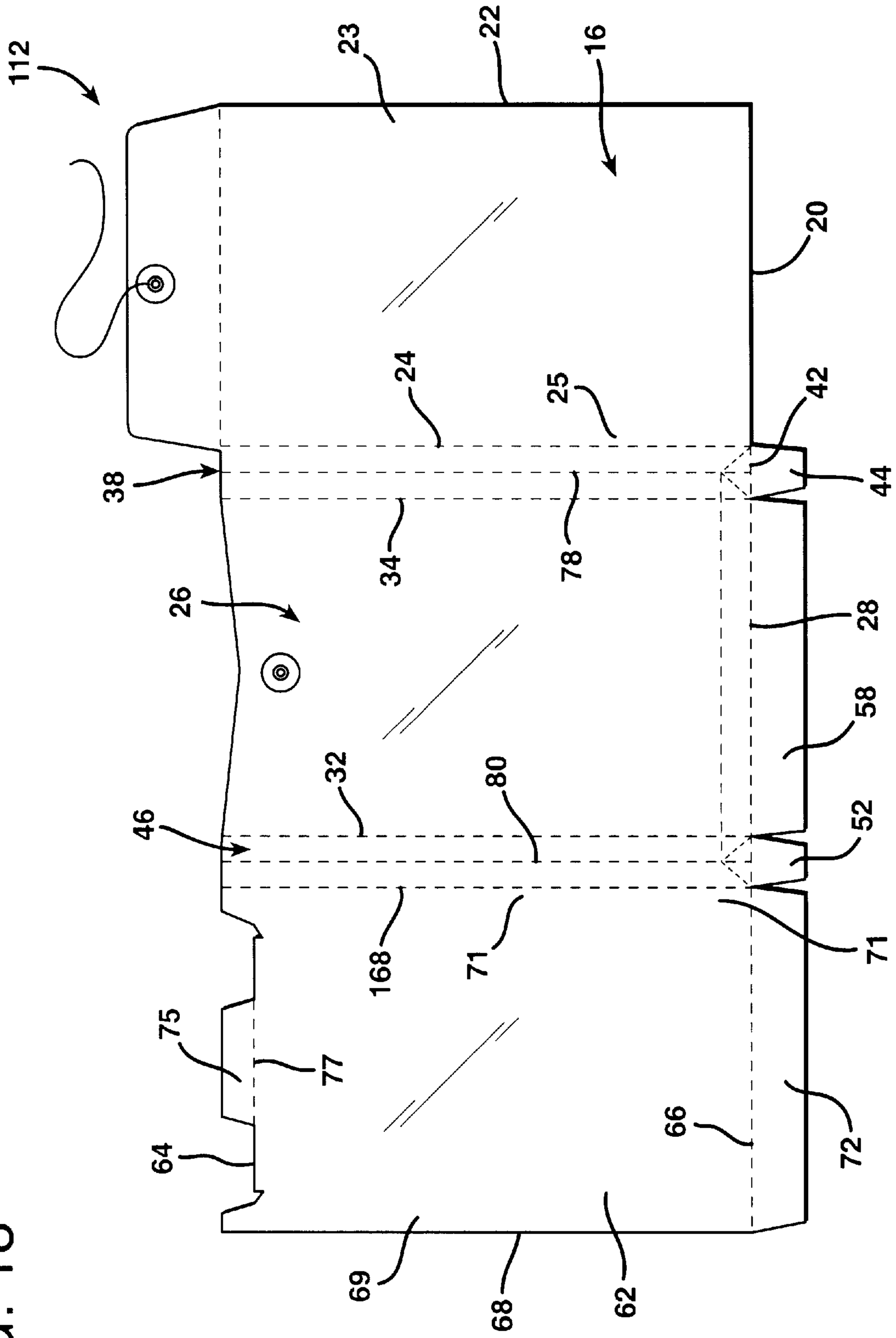

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FIG. 18

OFFICE ENVELOPE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an envelope for documents including a plurality of compartments of the type utilized in an office environment.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Various types of office envelopes having a plurality of compartments have been designed in the past. However, competition is quite great in the office supply industry. Moreover, due to the tremendous number of units of expendable supplies such as interoffice routing envelopes that are sold, even a small, incremental decrease in manufacturing costs produces a very significant overall savings in manufacturing, and provides the manufacturer with a considerable competitive edge.

The present invention involves a construction for an interoffice routing envelope which achieves an economy of construction as contrasted with conventional routing envelopes of this type. Like commercially available interoffice routing envelopes, the envelope of the invention provides a plurality of pockets. However, due to its unique construction, the envelope of the invention can be fabricated at a savings compared with comparable envelopes that are currently commercially available.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a multicompartment office envelope which is constructed in a unique and novel manner. By utilizing an envelope construction according to the invention, a considerable economic savings in cost of manufacture can be achieved in producing envelopes of this type in large quantities.

In one broad aspect the invention may be considered to be an envelope for documents having an outside pocket and comprised of at least one sheet of flat stock cut and folded to form a front panel, a back panel, a web side panel, an overlap side panel, a pair of side panel bottom flaps, an inside bottom panel, an outside bottom panel, and a pocket panel. The pocket panel has opposite side edges with side sealing margins adjacent thereto. One of the front and back panels is delineated from the side panels by folds in the sheet. The other of the front and back panels has a longitudinally cut side edge defined by a cut end of the sheet. A first attachment margin on the other of the front and back panels lies immediately adjacent to the cut side edge thereof. The overlap side panel also has an attachment margin and a longitudinally cut side edge defined by another cut in the sheet immediately adjacent to the attachment margin thereof. The attachments margins of the overlap side panel and of the other of the front and back panels are sealed to each other throughout their lengths. One of the side sealing margins of the pocket panel is sealed to at least one of the attachment margins of the overlap side panel and the other of the front and back panels. The other of the sealing margins of the pocket panel is sealed to the other of the front and back panels adjacent to the web side panel. The bottom panels and the side panel bottom flaps are folded together and the bottom panels are sealed to each other.

The envelope of the invention may be formed from either one sheet or two sheets of flat stock, depending upon whether or not panels having different physical characteristics are desired. For example, it may be desirable for the complete structure of the envelope to be opaque. In such a case it is easiest and most economical to form the entire structure of the envelope from a single sheet of flat stock. When the envelope of the invention is constructed in this manner, all of the panels, flaps, margins, and edges are formed by articulated folds in the same sheet of flat stock. Alternatively, the front, back, and side panels, the side closure flaps, and one of the bottom panels may be formed from a first sheet of flat stock while the pocket panel and other bottom panel are formed of a second sheet of flat stock. This latter type of construction may be used, for example, when it is desirable for the pocket of the envelope to be transparent while the main enclosure of the envelope is opaque.

In all embodiments of the envelope of the invention, the front, back, and side panels are formed from the same sheet of flat stock so that one of the front and back panels is delineated by folds from side panels on both of its lateral sides. One of these side panels, which may be considered to be an overlap side panel, has an exposed longitudinally extending edge with an attachment or sealing margin located immediately adjacent thereto and extending the entire length of the overlap side panel. This sealing margin of the overlap panel faces, contacts and is sealed to a corresponding attachment or sealing margin of the other of the front and back panels which is not bounded by a side panel on both of its sides. This corresponding attachment margin lies adjacent an opposing cut edge defined by a cut in the sheet of the material that delineates the outer or exposed edge of the other of the front and back panels.

The sealing or attachment margins of both the overlap side panel and the other of the front and back panels are secured to each other throughout their mutually contacting lengths by thermal welds, solvent seals, adhesive, or other conventional means. Lateral closure of the main compartment of the envelope is performed near one of the lateral edges of either the front or back panel immediately adjacent the overlap side panel.

The overlying pocket panel that is sealed to the other of the front and back panels lying therebeneath may be sealed adjacent the overlap side panel by the same, longitudinal seal that joins the attachment margin of the overlap panel to the attachment margin of the other of the front and back panels. In this case the seal along the side of the envelope at the overlap side panel thereof may be a single, linear, thermal or other type of seal that extends through all of the layers at that location of the structural material from which the envelope is formed. Specifically, in this case the side sealing margin adjacent the edge of the pocket panel is sealed through the intermediate structure of either the attachment margin of the overlap side panel or the attachment margin of the other of the front and back panels to the remaining of these attachment margins located therebeneath.

In an alternative construction two different seals may be employed proximate the same edge of the pocket panel. Specifically, the attachment margins of the overlap panel and the other of the front and back panels having a sealing or attachment margin is performed with one longitudinally extending linear seal. Thereafter, a second longitudinally extending linear seal joins one of the side sealing margins of the pocket panel to the front or back panel of the base sheet located immediately therebeneath. In either case, all three plies of the material are attached to each other closely adjacent to each other at the overlap side panel. In the one case, one of the side sealing margins of the pocket panel is sealed to either the attachment margin of the overlap side panel or the attachment margin of the other of the front and back panels. In the other case, one of the side sealing

margins of the pocket panel is sealed to both of the overlapping attachment margins of the overlap side panel and the other of the front and back panels. In both cases the other of the side sealing margins of the pocket panel is attached to the other of the front and back panels near the web side panel that extends between the front and back panels.

In the preferred construction of the invention, the one of the front and back panels that is bounded on both sides by the side panels by means of delineating demarcation folds therebetween is the front panel. The other of the front and back panels, that is the front and back panel having a sealing margin, is the back panel.

Of course, to form a document compartment in an envelope it is necessary to seal not only the sides of the compartment, but the bottom as well. In the envelope of the invention, the bottom is closed by sealing together one bottom panel extending from the base structure and another bottom panel extending from the overlying pocket structure. The bottom panels from these two structures project toward each other and reside in overlapping relationship, preferably throughout both their length and width. Also, the side panels on the base structure are formed with end closure flaps which project inwardly and also in an overlying relationship with the bottom panels a short distance in from the envelope sides. A single, laterally extending, linear thermal or other type of seal across the bottom of the structure can then be used to permanently close the bottom of the envelope. Preferably, the inside bottom panel, that is the bottom panel facing inwardly toward the bottom of the main compartment, is delineated by a bottom fold from one of the front and back panels. The outside bottom panel is delineated by another bottom fold from the pocket panel. Alternatively, however, the bottom panel projecting from the pocket panel may serve as the inner bottom panel, while the bottom panel projecting from the front or back panel may serve as the outer panel.

The invention is preferably also constructed with a closure flap projecting from the back panel and extending thereacross throughout its width. The closure flap is folded down to overlap the upper portion of the front panel. In a preferred construction of the envelope of the invention, some releasable fastening system employing button closures secured together by string, flexible hook and loop fastening pads, snaps, or interlocking clasps is used to releasably secure the closure flap to hold the top of the main compartment of the envelope shut and thereby prevent documents from inadvertently falling from the mouth of the envelope. The releasable closure flap engagement elements employed hold the closure flap folded over to envelop a portion of the front panel remote from the bottom panels.

Preferably also, the envelope is provided with a retaining tab that projects from the top of the pocket panel remote from the bottom panel. The retaining tab is folded down into the outside pocket of the structure back toward the bottom panels. The retaining tab thereby serves as a means for securing an item such as a routing sheet in the outside pocket of the envelope.

In some embodiments of the invention it may be desirable for the outer pocket to be formed of a transparent material, while the main base or body of the envelope is formed of an opaque material. In this construction, the front panel, the back panel, the top closure flap, the side panels, the side panel bottom flaps, and one of the bottom panels are formed from the same sheet of flat stock, which is fabricated of an opaque material. This opaque material may be manila paper, opaque-colored polypropylene, opaque card stock, or any other conventional opaque, flat sheet stock material. When the outer pocket is to be transparent, the pocket panel and the other bottom panel are formed of a different sheet of flat stock. For example, the pocket panel and the other bottom panel may be formed of a transparent sheet of polypropylene.

In preferred constructions of the invention, the office envelope is capable of being reduced to a flattened state. This is achieved by forming pleats in the side panels and by delineating a fold near either the bottom of the pocket panel and the other of the front and back panels which it immediately overlies. By folding the structure at this fold line, the envelope can be reduced to a very flat condition which is suitable for shipment, sale, and storage of a quantity of envelopes of this type. However, in use, the folded over bottom of the structure can be unflattened and the pleated sides expanded to further separate the front and back panels from each other so that the main compartment of the envelope can hold a considerable quantity of documents.

In another aspect the invention may be considered to be an office envelope comprised of a base sheet of stock of uniform thickness throughout and a pocket sheet of uniform thickness throughout. The base sheet is folded to form overlying front and back panels laterally separated by a pair of side panels. One of the front and back panels is laterally bounded on both sides by the side panels and is delineated therefrom by longitudinal folds in the base sheet. The other of the front and back panels is laterally bounded on only one of its sides by one of the side panels. This other of the front and back panels has a longitudinal die cut edge with an edge margin adjacent thereto extending its length. One of the side panels is located between the front and back panels and is delineated therefrom by longitudinal folds in the base sheet. The other of the side panels has a longitudinal die cut edge with an edge margin adjacent thereto extending throughout its length. The edge margins of the other side panel and of the other of the front and back panels overlap and are sealed together throughout their lengths.

The base sheet further defines a base sheet bottom panel projecting from the one of the front and back panels bounded on both sides by the side panels. The base sheet also further defines side end flaps projecting from the side panels adjacent the base sheet bottom panel.

The pocket sheet is folded to form a pocket panel overlying the other of the front and back panels. The pocket sheet has opposing longitudinal side edges with pocket panel edge margins adjacent thereto and extending throughout the length of the pocket panel. A pocket sheet bottom panel projects from the pocket panel. Both of the bottom panels and the side end flaps are folded into a mutually overlying relationship and the bottom panels are sealed together. One of the pocket panel side edge margins is sealed throughout its length to at least one of the edge margins of the base sheet that overlap each other. The other of the pocket panel side edge margins is sealed throughout its length to the other of the front and back panels remote from the edge margins of the base sheet.

In one embodiment of the invention, one of the pocket panel side edge margins is sealed to only the edge margin of the other side panel. In an alternative embodiment, one of the pocket panel side edge margins is sealed to both the edge margin of the other side panel and the edge margin of the other of the front and back panels.

The invention may be described with greater clarity and particularity by reference to the accompanying drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a front elevational view of one preferred embodiment of an office envelope according to the invention.

FIG. **2** is a right-side elevational view of the office envelope of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a rear elevational view of the office envelope of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **4** is a top plan view of the office envelope of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **5** is a detail indicated at **5** in FIG. **4**.

FIG. **6** is a left-side elevational detail of the lower portion of the envelope of FIG. **1** shown before folding and sealing of the bottom panels and side end flaps.

FIG. **7** is a left-side elevational detail illustrating the portion of the envelope shown in FIG. **6** after folding and sealing of the bottom panels and side end flaps.

FIG. **8** is a top plan detail illustrating an alternative embodiment to that depicted in FIG. **5**.

FIG. **9** is a plan view illustrating the sheet of base stock prior to folding which is used in the construction of the envelope of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **10** is a plan view illustrating the sheet of pocket stock prior to folding which is used in the construction of the envelope of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **11** is a front elevational view of an alternative embodiment of the office envelope of the invention.

FIG. **12** is right-side elevational view of the envelope of FIG. **11**.

FIG. **13** is a rear elevational view of the envelope of FIG. **11**.

FIG. **14** is a top plan view of the envelope of FIG. **11**.

FIG. **15** is a detail indicated at **15** in FIG. **14**.

FIG. **16** is a left-side elevational view of the lower portion of the envelope of FIG. **11** shown prior to folding and sealing of the bottom panels and the side end flaps.

FIG. **17** is a left-side elevational detail illustrating the portion of the envelope of FIG. **16** shown after folding and sealing of the bottom panels and side end flaps.

FIG. **18** is a plan view showing the single sheet of flat stock prior to folding used in the construction of the envelope of FIG. **11**.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT

FIG. **1** illustrates an office envelope **10** comprising at least one, and in the embodiment of FIGS. **1–10**, a total of two sheets of flat stock including a base sheet **12** and a pocket sheet **14** illustrated in FIGS. **9** and **10**, respectively. Both the base sheet **12** and the pocket sheet **14** may be formed of polyethylene or polypropylene. Preferably, the base sheet **12** is formed of an opaque polyethylene while the pocket sheet **14** is clear. As illustrated in FIG. **9**, the base sheet **12** is cut and folded to form a back panel **16** which is bounded by a back panel top edge **18**, a back panel bottom edge **20** parallel to the back panel top edge **18**, and a pair of mutually parallel back panel side edges **22** and **24**. The back panel side edges **22** and **24** are both perpendicular to the back panel top edge **18** and the back panel bottom edge **20**.

The base sheet **12** also defines a front panel **26** having a front panel bottom edge **28**, an opposing front panel top edge **30**, and a pair of front panel side edges **32** and **34**. The front panel side edges **32** and **34** are both parallel to the back panel side edges **22** and **24** and extend between the front panel top edge **30** and the front panel bottom edge **28**.

The front panel bottom edge **28** is linearly aligned with the back panel bottom edge **20**. That is, both of the edges **20** and **28** lie on the same straight linear line **36** when the face sheet **12** is in the unfolded condition depicted in FIG. **9**.

The base sheet **12** also defines a web side panel **38** having a top web side edge **40** and a bottom web side edge **42** with a trapezoidal-shaped side panel bottom closure flap **44** extending from the bottom web side edge **42**.

The web side panel **38** is delineated by the first back and front panel side edges **24** and **34** and by the top web side edge **40** and the bottom web side edge **42**. The web side panel **38** is thereby bounded on both of its opposite sides by the front panel **16** and the back panel **26**.

The base sheet **12** also defines an overlap side panel **46** located alongside and delineated at a second side edge of one of the front and back panels **16** and **26**. In the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. **1–10**, the one of the front and back panels **16** and **26** alongside which the overlap side panel **46** is located is the front panel **26**. The other of the front and back panels **16** and **26** is the back panel **16**. The side edge **24** of the back panel **16** and the side edge **34** of the front panel **26** may be considered to be the first side edges of their respective back and front panels **16** and **26**. The base sheet **12** also defines a base sheet bottom panel **58** which extends from the first one of the front and back panels, namely the front panel **26** at the bottom edge **28** thereof.

The front panel **26** is longitudinally bounded by folds with the side panels **38** and **46**. These folds lie at the opposing side edges **32** and **34** of the front panel **26**. The overlap side panel **46** has a top overlap side edge **48**, a bottom overlap side edge **50**, and a small trapezoidal-shaped overlap side panel bottom closure flap **52** extending from the bottom overlap side edge **50**. The overlap side panel **46** is delineated from the front panel **26** at the second side edge **32** of the front panel **26**. One of the side edges of the overlap side panel **46** is formed by the second edge **32** of the front panel **26**. The other side edge of the overlap side panel **46** is an edge **54** which is parallel to the second side edge **32**.

The overlap side panel **46** has an overlap margin **56** that projects outwardly from the side edge **54** of the overlap side panel **46**. The overlap margin **56** extends laterally in a direction away from the front panel **26**.

As illustrated in FIGS. **1–4**, the panels **16**, **26**, **38**, **46**, and **58** formed on the base sheet **12** are folded along all of the longitudinally extending panel edges **24**, **34**, **32**, and **54** and the bottom panel **58**, and the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52** are folded along the laterally extending edges **28**, **42**, and **50** to define an enclosure **60** therewithin, as illustrated in FIG. **4**. The overlap margin **56** of the overlap side panel **46** contacts and is sealed to the other of the front and back panels, namely the back panel **16** throughout a sealing margin **23**, adjacent a second side edge **22** thereof, as best illustrated in FIGS. **4** and **5**.

A closure flap **19** projects from the back panel top edge **18** of the back panel **16**. In the finished office envelope **10**, the closure flap **19** is folded over to overlap a portion of the front panel **26** remote from the bottom panels **58** and **72**. The closure flap **19** is provided with a conventional disc-shaped plastic fastening button **74** at its center. Another plastic fastening button **76** is provided laterally centered in the upper portion of the front panel **26**. A string **78** is secured to the rivet that attaches the closure button **74** to the closure flap **19**. The button **74** on the closure flap **19**, together with the attachment string **78**, form a first closure element on the closure flap **19**. The button **76** on the front panel **26** forms a second closure element thereon. The string **78** can be wound around the other closure button **76** to secure the enclosure **60** of the office envelope **10** shut. The first and second closure elements are releasably engageable together by winding the string **78** in a series of passes about the buttons **74** and **76**, in a conventional manner.

The pocket sheet **14** is also of a uniform thickness throughout and is cut and folded to form a pocket panel **62** that is positioned to overly the back panel **16** of the base sheet **12**. A generally trapezoidal-shaped pocket bottom panel **72** extends from the pocket bottom edge **66**. The pocket sheet **14** also defines a pocket top edge **64**, a pocket bottom edge **66**, and a pair of mutually parallel pocket panel side edges **68** and **70**.

As illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **7**, the pocket bottom panel **72** is folded to overlap and is sealed to the base sheet bottom panel **58**. One out of the pair of pocket panel side edges, specifically the pocket panel side edge **68**, overlaps and is sealed to the base sheet **12** at the overlap margin **56** of the overlap side panel **46**. The other of the pocket panel side edges, which is the edge **70**, is sealed to the back panel **16** remote from and parallel to the overlap margin **56**, as illustrated in FIG. **4**.

The longitudinally extending side sealing regions of the pocket sheet **14** located immediately adjacent to the side edges **68** and **70** thereof are respectively indicated at **69** and **71**. These regions are not delineated by folds in the pocket sheet **14**, but may be considered to be side sealing margins approximately three-sixteenths of an inch in width and extending lengthwise along the pocket panel **62** immediately adjacent to the pocket side edges **68** and **70**, respectively.

The region immediately adjacent to the back panel side edge **22** is indicated at **23**. This region is not delineated by any fold, but is approximately three-sixteenths of an inch in width and runs throughout the length of the back panel **16** immediately adjacent to the side edge **22** thereof. The region **23** may be considered to be a sealing margin. A corresponding region **25** immediately adjacent to the back panel side edge **24** may also be considered to be a sealing margin.

The manner of attachment and sealing of the panels of the base sheet **12** and the pocket sheet **14** to each other is best illustrated in FIGS. **4–7**. As illustrated in FIG. **5**, in one preferred embodiment of the invention, one of the sealing margins of the pocket panel **62**, specifically the sealing margin **69**, is sealed to both the attachment margin **56** of the overlap side panel **46** and the attachment margin **23** of the back panel **16**. Sealing throughout the length of the back panel **16** and pocket panel **62** is performed with a conventional heat sealing machine through three plies of plastic material. Specifically, the pocket panel **62**, the overlap panel **46**, and the back panel **16** are all sealed together by a single, linear heat seal, as illustrated in FIG. **5**. In this embodiment, the same longitudinal seal indicated at **86**, forms a longitudinal seal for the enclosure **60** adjacent the side edges **54** and **22** and also seals the pocket sheet **14** to the base sheet **12** along one edge of the pocket panel **62**.

An alternative sealing arrangement according to the invention is illustrated in FIG. **8**. In that embodiment a first longitudinal seal **88** is employed to seal the overlapping margin **56** of the overlap panel **46** to the sealing margin **23** of the back panel **16** adjacent to the die cut edge **22** thereof. A second linear, longitudinally extending heat seal **90** is thereafter employed to seal the sealing margin **69** of the pocket panel **62** to the sealing margin **56** of the overlap panel **46**. The embodiment of FIG. **5** has the advantage of requiring but a single thermal seal. The embodiment of FIG. **8** has the advantage of requiring seals through only two plies of material.

With either the embodiment of FIG. **5** or the embodiment of FIG. **8**, the bottom of the enclosure **60** is closed and sealed as illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **7**. As shown in these drawing figures, the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52** are first folded along the lines **42** and **52**, respectively, upwardly from a vertical orientation as illustrated in FIG. **6** to a horizontal orientation as illustrated in FIG. **7**. The base sheet bottom panel **58** that extends from the front panel **26** is next folded up along the front panel bottom edge **28** from the generally vertical orientation shown in FIG. **6** to a horizontal orientation shown in FIG. **7**.

Finally, the bottom panel **72** of the pocket sheet **14** is folded upwardly about the bottom edge **66** of the pocket panel **62** from the generally vertical orientation illustrated in FIG. **6** to the generally horizontal orientation illustrated in FIG. **7**. The bottom panel **72** of the pocket sheet **14** is folded upwardly on the outside of the bottom panel **58**, which in turn is folded upwardly against the undersides of the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52**. The bottom panels **72** and **58** are thereupon sealed together by a single transverse seal indicated at **94** in FIG. **7**. This step in the fabrication of the envelope **10** closes the bottom of the envelope **10**, as well as the bottom of the outside pocket formed between the pocket panel **62** and the front panel **26**. A pocket enclosure **104** is thereby defined between the pocket panel **62** and the underlying back panel **16** of the envelope **10**.

Once the single seal **86** of FIG. **5** or the double seals **88** and **90** of FIG. **8** have been created to attach the first side edge **68** of the pocket panel **62** to the back panel **16** adjacent the die cut edge **22** thereof, the other side sealing margin **71** of the pocket sheet **14** is sealed to the back panel **16** at the sealing margin **25** near the longitudinal edge **24** thereof. That is, the seal **92**, shown in FIG. **4**, is created through the two plies of material of the base sheet **12** and pocket sheet **14** that are to be sealed remote from the overlap sealing margin **56**.

As shown in FIGS. **2** and **4–7**, each of the base sheet side panels **38** and **46** has a longitudinal fold **78** and **80**, respectively, extending from the top edges **40** and **48** to near, but just short of, the bottom edges **42** and **50**, thereof. The longitudinal folds **78** and **80** form pleats in both of the side panels **38** and **46**, as best illustrated in FIG. **4**.

The base sheet **12** is preferably folded with short diagonal folds **96** and **98** in the lower regions of the side panels **38** and **46** to create small, triangular-shaped panels **100** in the base sheet **12** immediately above the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52**. Also, a fold **102** is preferable formed across the front panel **26** parallel and closely adjacent to the bottom edge of the front panel **26** and folds **103** are formed in the side panels **38** and **46** from the ends of the fold **102** to the apices of the triangular-shaped panels **100**. Together, the folds **78**, **80**, **96**, **98**, **102**, and **103** permit the envelope **10** to be fully collapsed from the expanded condition depicted in FIG. **2** to a collapsed condition in which the front panel **26** resides in contact with the back panel **16** throughout most of their mutually adjacent surface areas. This folding technique allows a multiplicity of envelopes **10** to be packaged together while occupying a minimum volume. The collapsed envelopes **10** can thereby be stored and shipped within a relatively compact volume.

Once all of the seals **92**, **94**, and **86** or **88** and **90** have been established, the office envelope **10** is ready for use. As illustrated in FIG. **4**, the pleats in the side panels **38** and **46** allow the sides of the envelope **10** to be expanded or collapsed to accommodate the necessary volume of papers in the enclosure **60**. Since, the pocket sheet **14** is transparent, a routing sheet placed in the pocket enclosure **104** is clearly visible from the back when the pocket panel **62** is exposed, as illustrated in FIG. **3**.

Individuals who receive the envelope **10** may unfasten and refasten the top closure flap fastening buttons **74** and **76**

utilizing the fastening string **78**. As each user passes the envelope **10** along to next person on the routing list, the user makes an indication on the routing sheet contained in the pocket **104** to indicate receipt and awareness of the contents of the routing envelope **10**.

The retaining tab **75** that projects outwardly from the top edge **64** of the pocket panel **62** is folded along fold line **77** so as to extend back down into the pocket **104**. The retaining tab **75** is located remote from the bottom panels **58** and **72** and is folded back toward the bottom panels **58** and **72** between the pocket panel **62** and the back panel **16** to which the pocket panel **62** is sealed. The retaining tab **75** thereby serves as a means for retaining the routing sheet in the pocket **104** as the envelope **10** is routed from one person to the next. That is, the retaining tab **75** engages the center of the top edge of a routing sheet inserted into the pocket **104**, and prevents it from inadvertently becoming separated from the envelope **10**.

In the embodiments of FIGS. **1–10**, the front panel **26**, the back panel **16**, the top closure flap **19**, the side panels **38** and **46**, and the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52** and one of the bottom panels, specifically the bottom panel **58**, are formed from the same sheet **12** of flat stock. The pocket panel **62** and the other bottom panel **72** are formed from a different sheet of flat stock. As previously indicated, the pocket sheet **14** is preferably transparent, while the base sheet **12** is preferably opaque in nature.

In some instances it may be more desirable to create the envelope of the invention from a single sheet of flat stock, such as the flat sheet of polypropylene or polyethylene **112** illustrated in FIG. **18**. The single sheet of flat stock **112** illustrated in FIG. **18** is utilized to create an office envelope **110**, illustrated in FIGS. **11**, **12**, and **13**. In the office envelope **110**, all of the panels, flaps, margins, and edges are formed by articulated folds in the same sheet of flat stock **112**. The sheet **112** may, for example, be formed of a translucent plastic.

The office envelope **110** includes all of the same panels and edges as the envelope **10**. These are identified by the same reference numbers in FIGS. **11–18** as in FIGS. **1–10** where there is no difference at all in the nature of the panel, margin, or seal involved. Since the office envelope **110** is fabricated from a single flat sheet **112** of polypropylene or polyethylene stock, rather than two sheets, there is no overlap margin **56** in the envelope **110**. Rather, the outside edge of the side panel **46** remote from the back panel edge **22** in the sheet of flat stock is formed by a fold **168** in the single sheet **112**. The fold **168** serves both as the first edge of the pocket panel **62** and also as the edge of the side panel **46** opposite the other side edge **32** thereof.

The bottom of the envelope **110** is formed by folding and sealing the bottom panels **58** and **72** and the side panel bottom closure flaps **44** and **52** in the same manner as illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **7**. The closing and sealing of the bottom of the office envelope **110** as depicted in FIGS. **16** and **17** is identical to the closure and sealing of the bottom of the office envelope **10** depicted and described in conjunction with FIGS. **6** and **7**.

The same alternative edge sealing technique illustrated in FIG. **5** may be utilized to fabricate the envelope **110**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **15**, a single heat seal **186** has been employed to seal the pocket side sealing margin **69** of the pocket panel **62** to the facing surface of the back panel **16** immediately adjacent the side edge **24** thereof. The seal **186** extends through only the two plies of material at the region **69** of the pocket panel **62** and the facing region **25** of the back panel **16** adjacent the side edge **24** thereof. Another longitudinally extending heat seal **188** is utilized to seal the other sealing region **71** of the pocket panel **62** to the sealing margin **23** of the back panel **16**.

Undoubtedly, numerous variations and modifications of the invention will become readily apparent to those familiar with office supply products, such as routing envelopes. For example, in the embodiments of FIGS. **1–10**, the position of the front and back panels **16** and **26** can be reversed, so that the back panel **16**, rather than the front panel **26**, is bounded on both sides by the side panels **38** and **46**. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should not be construed as limited to the specific embodiments depicted and described.

I claim:

1. An envelope for documents having an outside pocket and comprised of at least one sheet of flat stock cut and folded to form a front panel, a back panel, a web side panel, an overlap side panel, a pair of side panel bottom flaps, an inside bottom panel, an outside bottom panel, and a pocket panel having opposite side edges with side sealing margins adjacent thereto, wherein one of said front and back panels is delineated from said side panels by folds in said sheet, the other of said front and back panels has a longitudinally cut side edge defined by a cut end of said sheet and a first attachment margin on said other of said front and back panels lies immediately adjacent to said cut side edge thereof, and said overlap side panel has an attachment margin and a longitudinally cut side edge defined by another cut end in said sheet immediately adjacent to said attachment margin thereof, and said attachment margins of said overlap side panel and said other of said front and back panels are sealed to each other throughout their lengths, and one of said side sealing margins of said pocket panels is sealed to at least one of said attachment margins of said overlap side panel and said other of said front and back panels, and the other of said side sealing margins of said pocket panel is sealed to said other of said front and back panels adjacent to said web side panel, and said bottom panels and said side panel bottom flaps are folded together and said bottom panels are sealed to each other.

2. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein all of said panels, flaps, margins, and edges are formed by articulated folds in the same sheet of flat stock.

3. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said one of said side sealing margins of said pocket panel is sealed to said attachment margin of said overlap side panel.

4. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said one of said sealing margins of said pocket panel is sealed to both of said attachment margins of said overlap side panel and said other of said front and back panels.

5. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said one of said front and back panels is said front panel and said other of said front and back panels is said back panel.

6. An envelope according to claim **5** further comprising a closure flap projecting from said back panel and extending thereacross throughout its width, and said closure flap is folded down to overlap a portion of said pocket panel.

7. An envelope according to claim **6** further comprising a retaining tab projecting from said pocket panel remote from said bottom panels, and said retaining tab is folded down into said outside pocket toward said bottom panels.

8. An envelope according to claim **6** further comprising a first closure element on said closure flap and a second closure element on said pocket panel, and said first and second closure elements are releasably engageable together.

9. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said inside bottom panel is delineated by a bottom fold from said one of

said front and back panels and said outside bottom panel is delineated by another bottom fold from said pocket panel.

10. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said front panel, said back panel, said side panels, said side panel bottom flaps, and one of said bottom panels are formed from a first sheet of flat stock as aforesaid and said pocket panel and said other bottom panel are formed of a second sheet of flat stock as aforesaid.

11. An envelope according to claim **10** wherein said first sheet of flat stock is formed of an opaque material and said second sheet of flat stock is formed of a transparent material.

12. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein longitudinal folds form pleats in both of said side panels.

13. An envelope according to claim **1** wherein said bottom panels are sealed together by a single, transverse, linear seal.

14. An office envelope comprising:

a base sheet of stock of uniform thickness throughout folded to form overlaying front and back panels laterally separated by a pair of side panels therebetween wherein one of said front and back panels is laterally bounded on both sides by said side panels and is delineated therefrom by longitudinal folds in said base sheet, and the other of said front and back panels is laterally bounded on only one of its sides by one of said side panels and has a longitudinal die cut edge with an edge margin adjacent thereto extending throughout its length, and one of said side panels is located between said front and back panels and is delineated therefrom by longitudinal folds in said base sheet while the other of said side panels has a longitudinal die cut edge with an edge margin adjacent thereto extending throughout its length, and said edge margins of said other side panel and of said other of said front and back panels overlap and are sealed together throughout their lengths, and said base sheet further defines a base sheet bottom panel projecting from said one of said front and back panels and side end flaps projecting from said side panels adjacent said base sheet bottom panel, and

a pocket sheet of uniform thickness throughout folded to form a pocket panel overlying said other of said front and back panels and having opposing longitudinal side edges with pocket panel edge margins adjacent thereto and extending throughout the length of said pocket panel, and a pocket sheet bottom panel projecting from said pocket panel, and both of said bottom panels and said side end flaps are folded into a mutually overlying relationship and said bottom panels are sealed together and one of said pocket panel edge margins is sealed throughout its length to at least one of said edge margins of said base sheet that overlap each other and the other of said pocket panel edge margins is sealed throughout its length to said other of said front and back panels remote from said side edge margins of said base sheet.

15. An office envelope according to claim **14** wherein said one of said pocket panel edge margins is sealed to said edge margin of said other side panel.

16. An office envelope according to claim **14** wherein said one of said pocket panel edge margins is sealed to both said edge margin of said other side panel and to said edge margin of said other of said front and back panels.

17. An office envelope according to claim **14** further comprising a closure flap projecting from said other of said front and back panels and releasable closure flap engagement elements to hold said closure flap folded over to overlap a portion of said one of said front and back panels remote from said bottom panels.

18. An office envelope according to claim **14** further comprising a retaining tab projecting from said pocket panel remote from said bottom panels and folded back toward said bottom panels between said pocket panel and said other of said front and back panels.

19. An office envelope comprising:

a sheet of base stock of uniform thickness throughout cut and folded to form a back panel defining a back panel top edge, a back panel bottom edge parallel to said back panel top edge, and a pair of mutually parallel back panel side edges both perpendicular to said back panel top and bottom edges, a front panel having a front panel bottom edge linearly aligned with said back panel bottom edge, an opposing front panel top edge, and a pair of front panel side edges both parallel to said back panel side edges and extending between said front panel top and bottom edges, a web side panel delineated at a first side edge of each of said front and back panels and having a top web side edge and a bottom web side edge with a web side closure flap extending from said bottom web side edge, an overlap side panel located alongside and delineated at a second side edge of one of said front and back panels wherein said one of said front and back panels is longitudinally bounded by folds with said side panels, and said overlap side panel has a top overlap side edge, a bottom overlap side edge, and an overlap side closure flap extending from said bottom overlap side edge, and an overlap margin extending laterally in a direction away from said one of said front and back panels, and a base sheet bottom panel extending from said one of said front and back panels, and said panels are folded along all of said side edges to define an enclosure therewithin, with said overlap side panel overlap margin contacting and sealed to the other of said front and back panels adjacent to a second of said side edges thereof, and

a sheet of pocket stock of uniform thickness throughout cut and folded to form a pocket panel overlying said other of said front and back panels and having a pocket top edge, a pocket bottom edge, a pair of mutually parallel pocket side edges, and a pocket bottom panel extending from said pocket bottom edge, and said pocket bottom panel is folded to overlap and is sealed to said base sheet bottom panel, and one of said pair of pocket side edges overlaps and is sealed to said base sheet at said overlap margin thereof and the other of said pocket side edges is sealed to said other of said front and back panels remote from and parallel to said overlap margin.

20. An office envelope according to claim **19** wherein said sheet of base stock is opaque and said sheet of pocket stock is transparent.

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